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Thursday, Feb. 2

School Breakfast: Mini pancakes, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Chicken noodle soup, grilled cheese, fruit, carrots and dip.

Senior Menu: Roast pork, baked potato with sour cream, squash, apple sauce, Molasses cookie, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle at 2 p.m.
Varsity Boys Basketball hosts Tiospa Zina

Friday, Feb. 3

School Breakfast: Cereal, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Shrimp poppers, sweet potato tots, fruit, vegetable cups.

Senior Menu: Hamburger cabbage roll hot dish, mixed vegetables, pears, muffin.

Girls basketball at Tiospa Zina with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Saturday, Feb. 4

CFC Debate

Robotics at Mitchell Technical Institute

10 a.m.: Wrestling at Stanley County

Double Header Basketball with Warner in Groton (Girls JV game at 2 p.m., boys JV at 3 p.m., girls varsity at 4:30 p.m., boys varsity at 6 p.m.)

Apts for Rent

1 bedroom and HUGE 2 bedroom, 2 bath apartments available NOW! All utilities included except A/C, 1 bedroom \$504 and HUGE 2 bedroom 2 bath \$674
Please call or text 239-849-7674

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

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Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling
New & Cleaning of
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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Cheetahs 18, Chipmunks 17, Foxes 16, Shih Tzus 13, Coyotes 11, Jackelopes 9

Men's High Games: Roger Spanier 224, 212, John Sippel 214, 201, Ron Belden 212, Mike Wyly 204, Brad Larson 203

Women's High Games: Sue Stanley 172, Dar Larson 170, Lori Giedt 167

Men's High Series: John Sippel 610, Roger Spanier 602, Ron Belden 466

Women's High Series: Dar Larson 485, Sue Stanley 470, Darci Spanier 455

GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Eleven members and one guest were present for Wednesday's Kiwanis meeting.

The program speaker could not be present. Tom Paepke, president; led the short business session. Steve Simon, chairman; and Reed Litch, pro tem treasurer on the successful pancake brunch. The robotics were a big hit at the brunch. Next week's program leader will be LaVonne Helmer, followed by Reed Litch and Tom Mahan.

Gov. Daugaard Signs First Bill Of The Session

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard this afternoon signed the first bill of the 2017 Legislative Session into law. The piece of legislation, House Bill 1006, clarifies the timeline for posting notices for public meetings.

In 2016, the Legislature passed a bill requiring notices to be posted two intervening days prior to a meeting. HB 1006 clarifies the language by requiring notices to be posted three days before a meeting. The bill sets the same deadline for the submission of comments on rules.

Also today, the Governor signed two other bills into law: Senate Bill 8, an act to codify legislation enacted in 2016, and Senate Bill 16, an act to revise certain provisions regarding a violation for an escape from certain facilities, programs, or services located outside the penitentiary.

Groton Coffee Cup League

Team Standings: James Valley 20, Ten Pins 12, Kens 11, Jungle Lanes 5

High Games: Joyce Walter 183, Nancy Radke 180, Arlowyn Spencer 179

High Series: Joyce Walter 501, Arlowyn Spencer 445, Angie Carlson 421

Conde National League

Team Standings: Pirates 16, Cubs 14, Mets 13, Braves 11, Colts 10, Giants 8

Men's High Games: Topper Tastad 226, Larry Frohling 187, Lance Frohling 185

Men's High Series: Topper Tasdad 506, Larry Frohling 524, Lance Frohling 522

Women's High Games: Joyce Walter 193, Vickie Kramp 191, Mary Larson 190

Women's High Series: Joyce Walter 529, Mary Larson 502, Vickie Kramp 498

Presidential Disaster Declaration Approved For December Storm

PIERRE, S.D. – Gov. Dennis Daugaard says 24 South Dakota counties and two tribes may receive federal funding assistance to help recover from a late December storm that did more than \$9.1 million in damage to public property.

The public assistance is made available through a Presidential Disaster Declaration signed Wednesday by President Trump.

Counties involved are Butte, Clark, Codington, Day, Deuel, Dewey, Edmunds, Fall River, Faulk, Grant, Haakon, Hamlin, Harding, Jackson, Jones, Marshall, McPherson, Meade, Pennington, Perkins, Roberts, Stanley, Sully and Ziebach. Also included is the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe within Dewey and Ziebach counties and the Oglala Sioux Tribe within Jackson County.

All of the counties and tribes included in the declaration were those included in the Governor's request to the President earlier this month.

The storm started Dec. 24 and continued through Dec. 26. Blizzard conditions, high winds and freezing ice led to broken power poles, downed electrical lines and stranded motorists. Three deaths were associated with the storm.

Gov. Daugaard requested a disaster declaration on Jan. 23 after public property damage information was verified by FEMA, state and local officials.

A disaster declaration authorizes the federal government to provide recovery assistance for up to 75 percent of the eligible costs.

The Office of Emergency Management is part of the Department of Public Safety.

PARTS COUNTER SALES

Self motivated individual needed to fill our Parts Counter Sales position. Duties include parts sales, display stocking, shipping and receiving. Sponsored training, excellent benefits package and the possibility for advancement. Contact Steve at 605-395-6421 or email resume to s.harry@harrysinc.com.

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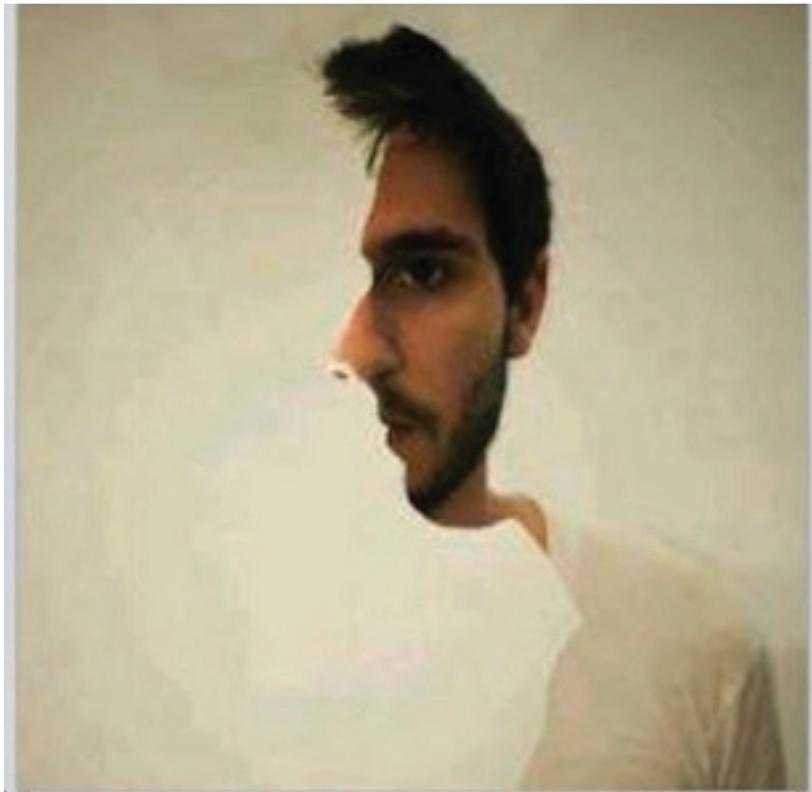


Macy Knecht Admitted to the University of South Dakota Earns Coyote Commitment Scholarship

VERMILLION, S.D. -- Macy Knecht has earned a \$6,000 Coyote Commitment Achievement Scholarship, which is awarded by the University of South Dakota to academically talented seniors who have been admitted for Fall 2017.

This award is based on strong standardized test scores and cumulative grade point average. Knecht is the daughter of Carol and Patrick Knecht and plans to major in Health Sciences. The Fall 2016 incoming class at USD received \$6.8 million in scholarships for academic, artistic, athletic or other successes. Sixty-two percent of new students on the Vermillion campus received awards from the USD Foundation, other USD accounts and from other private sources outside the university.

An eye, brain trick. You will enjoy this if you are using the right side of your brain. Stare at this picture carefully and you will see this man turn his face.



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**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**



**Larry Zimmerman
Secretary**

VETERANS, THE PULSE OF OUR COUNTRY!

There are a number of different visions associated with love, such as cupids and roses, but out of all the various symbols and images, none are more established than the heart.

On Valentine's Day, men and women around the world express their feelings of love with cards, chocolates, balloons, flowers, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, and other gifts; all of them decked with or designed in the form of traditional hearts.

It's not difficult to figure out the connection between the heart and Valentine's Day. The heart, after all, was thought in ancient times to be the source of all emotions. It later came to be associated only with the emotion of love.

Remember your heart beats daily with your individual pulse! The heartbeat of America is driven by veterans and their pulse for freedom. These men and women represent everything that our nation fights to protect, everything we value in life. Our honor, our liberty, our livelihood, lies with them.

The patriotism in their hearts is what allows everyday life to continue unimpeded; it is how they advance and do what they must for the good of the country. The veterans in our country show the most valued trait; selflessness, putting their country before themselves.

Over the next several years, more than a million service members will take off their uniform for the last time. These men and women have displayed extraordinary strength and resilience. They sacrificed personally for the greater good. They demonstrated remarkable perseverance in the face of adversity to protect the freedoms we enjoy daily. They showed care and compassion for those in need – many times at the risk of their own lives and they lived by the core values of duty, honor, and country; and in doing so, earned our trust, our support and our love.

Hearts in February are special on Valentine's Day, but without the continuous beat and constant vigilance that our service members and veterans have for freedom, the pulse would go quiet.

We benefitted --- every one of us --- from their service and sacrifice. Let's be there for them the same way they were there for us.

Caring for veterans is the very heart of President Lincoln's charge to every American in his second inaugural address near the end of our bloody Civil War. In 1865, President Lincoln directed us to care for those "who shall have borne the battle," and for their families and their survivors.

Our team, at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, stands ready to answer President Lincoln's charge. We have great resources to assist our veterans in obtaining their benefits. We encourage veterans to reach out to our staff, our county and tribal veterans service officers and our veterans service organizations. All of these partners are a free resource to help veterans and their families. They are there to educate them on benefits, assist in the application process and will lead the charge when an appeal is needed.

Remember your sweetheart this month, but listen for the pulse of your veterans who have fought with all their heart for our country.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

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Gun show set for Aberdeen

GUN SHOW: Dakota Territory Gun Collectors Association 15th Annual Aberdeen Gun Show. Saturday, February 4, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sunday, February 5, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Aberdeen Ramkota Hotel on Highway 281 North. Roger Krumm 701-851-0129.

They have arrived!

GDI Living  Fitness

25 Main St., Downtown Groton

2 NuSteps

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or Tina at 397-7285
for membership information

The T4r provides a smooth and natural motion that delivers a low impact, inclusive, total-body cardiovascular and strengthening workout for virtually all users. Get a low impact workout with high impact results.



 **livestream**
Upcoming Events

Thursday, Feb. 2

Boys host Tiospa Zina. JV at 6:30. Varsity at 8:00

gdilive.com

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Today in Weather History

February 2, 1960: Heavy icing from freezing rain accumulations from the afternoon of the 2nd to the afternoon of the 3rd occurred mainly across the eastern half of the state. Severe damage to power lines and telephone service occurred in the Watertown and Wessington Springs area. Ice coatings of up to 3 inches thick and having an estimated weight of nine pounds per foot of wire formed around telephone and some power lines over a wide area of the eastern counties. A 300 foot tower high collapsed at Wessington Springs and in some areas utility wires were completely down for stretches of 2 to 3 miles. Some 170 long distance telephone circuits were knocked out in larger cities and 19 towns from Bonesteel on south to Watertown on north were completely without telephone service for two to three days after the storm. Many highways were treacherous and numerous vehicles collided or slid off the road into the ditch. Many schools were also closed.

February 2, 2003: Widespread freezing rain developed across parts of central and into northeast South Dakota through the late night hours producing significant icing of a quarter to a half inch by the late morning hours. No significant tree damage or power outages occurred. Although, travel was greatly disrupted with many accidents and vehicles sliding off the road. The freezing rain changed over to snow during the mid-morning hours and became heavy with 6 to 9 inches of snow accumulating before it ended in the late evening. Some snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Ree Heights, Miller, and Faulkton, 7 inches at Clear Lake, 8 inches at Bryant, and 9 inches at Milbank.

February 2, 2011: Blizzard conditions developed along and east of the Sisseton Hills late on February 2nd and continued into the mid-morning hours of February 3rd. Strong southwest winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to around 55 mph picked up the existing snow cover causing blizzard conditions which wreaked havoc along Interstate-29. Whiteout conditions and heavy drifting brought traffic to a halt along a stretch of Interstate-29 from north of Wilmot to Sisseton. One-hundred fifty to two-hundred vehicles were stranded along this stretch. A full scale rescue operation ensued during the night and continued into the next day. Interstate-29 was closed from Watertown to the North Dakota border as it took most of the day to clean up all of the stalled vehicles. There were also many accidents along the stretch of the interstate with many people stranded for up to twelve hours. There were also many other people stranded on secondary roads who had to be rescued. No injuries occurred as a result of this incident. The Roberts County Emergency Manager was stranded and conducted emergency operations from his vehicle. Interstate-29 was reopened by the evening of February 3rd.

1898: The naming of hurricane after women was always the center of controversy. In the Southern Hemisphere near Australia, tropical cyclones were once called Willy-Willies. An Australian Meteorologist, Clement Wragge is credited for giving girls names to tropical cyclones by the end of the 19th Century. On this date, Wragge's weather journal showed a Willy-Willy named "Eline".

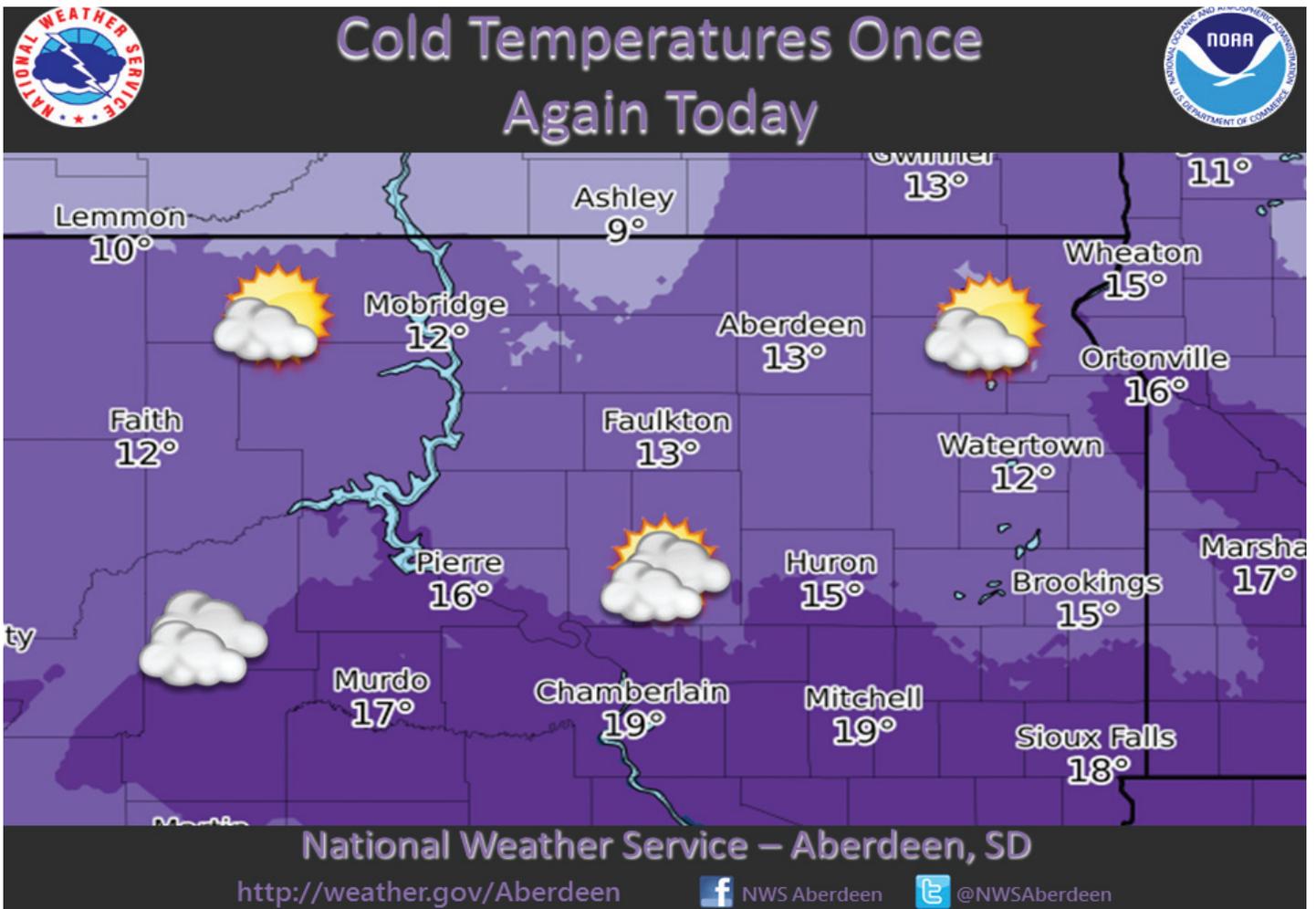
1905: At Des Moines, Iowa, a low temperature of 26 degrees below zero set their all-time February record low. This would be tied just 11 days later on the 13th. At Sioux City, Iowa, the low of 30 degrees below zero remains as their third-coldest temperature on record.

1996: An Arctic outbreak that lasted from late January through early February produced nearly 400 hundred record lows, 15 all-time low readings and over 50 new record lows for the month of February. Four states recorded their all-time record low temperatures including Tower, Minnesota on this date with a reading of 60 degrees below zero, canceling Tower's annual Icebox Days festival because it is too cold. Locations that reported their all-time record low or tied included: Cresco, IA: -36°, Osage, IA: -34°, Charles City, IA tied their all-time record low with -32° and Lancaster, WI tied their all-time record low with -31°. International Falls, MN and Glasgow, MT set records for the month of February with -45° and -38°, respectively. The temperature at Embarrass, MN plummeted to -53°. Rochester, MN dipped to -34° for its coldest temperature in 45 years. Green Bay, WI only reached -16° for the high temperature for the day, their coldest high temperature on record in February. The place to be this day was in Orlando, FL where it was a balmy 85 degrees.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Increasing Clouds	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy	Partly Sunny
High: 13 °F	Low: -3 °F	High: 16 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 31 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 20 °F



Surface high pressure will remain in place over the region through Friday. This will keep cold temperatures in place, along with mostly dry conditions. Highs today will be in the teens once again, with a northwest breeze. A brief warm-up is in store on Saturday with highs in the 20s and 30s.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 23.4 F at 12:07 AM

Low Outside Temp: 8.1 F at 8:03 AM

High Gust: 26.0 Mph at 1:22 PM

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1991

Record Low: -39 in 1917

Average High: 24°F

Average Low: 3°F

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.02

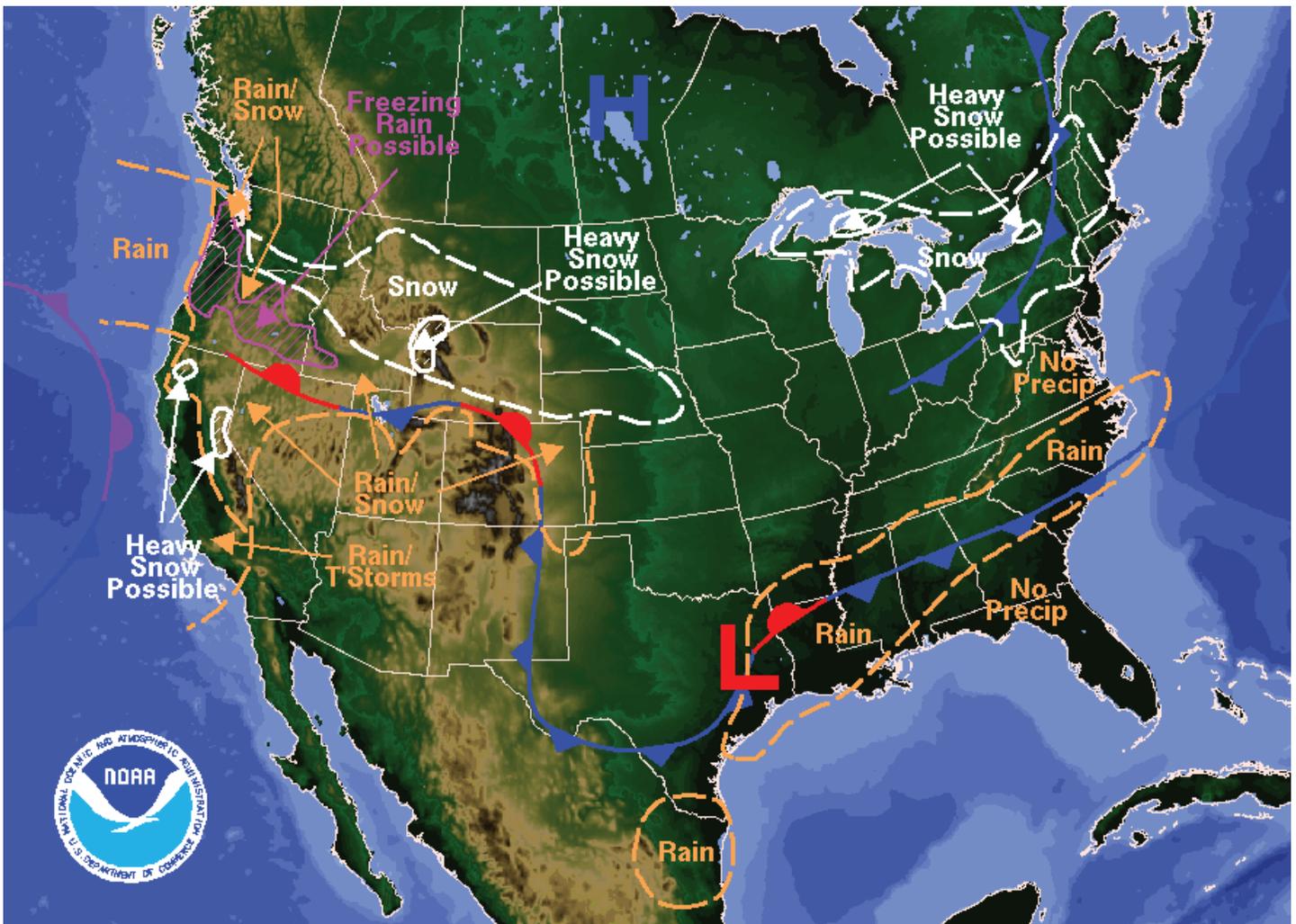
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.50

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:42 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Feb 02, 2017, issued 4:34 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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MERCY. WHO NEEDS IT?

Alexander the Great was the first conqueror of the world. Even today, as we recognize leaders who have impacted the world, he is considered as one of the most remarkable men of history.

Late in his life an artist was commissioned to paint a portrait of him. In discussing the content of the painting Alexander informed the artist that he was anxious to conceal the scar on his face.

To accommodate him, the artist painted the portrait of Alexander in a reflective mood with his head resting on his hand and a finger covering the scar. This act of insight and kindness worked perfectly and the scar was hidden. The artist wanted to meet the expectations of Alexander not embarrass him.

That's love in action – reflecting the mercy of one who honors the needs of others.

The Apostle Peter summed up the behavior that we, as Christians, are to show others: "Most important of all," he wrote, "continue to show deep love for each other."

Love is always expressed in showing mercy to those in need. If we say that we have love for others, yet do nothing to help them in their times of need, we do not reflect our appreciation for the compassion that God, through Christ, has shown us.

We can only show our gratitude for the grace of God in our lives by what we do to and for others. Words are not works and our thoughts will not help others.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to show our gratitude to You for the love, grace and mercy You shower upon us each day, by what we do to help others in their times of need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

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News from the Associated Press

Hollins with near triple-double, Omaha beats South Dakota

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Tra-Deon Hollins had 19 points, eight rebounds, and nine assists Wednesday night and Marcus Tyus scored four of Omaha's last eight points to help the Mavericks hold off South Dakota 91-83.

Tyus, who finished with 17 points, hit a pair of free throws with 38 seconds left and scored on a layup at 25 seconds to make it 87-80.

Daniel Norl had 12 points, and Tre'Shawn Thurman and Mitchell Hahn added 11 each for the Mavericks (15-10, 6-4 Summit).

Omaha pulled away with a 10-2 run to lead 79-70 on Tyus's basket with 3:07 left. The Coyotes (12-11, 5-5) closed to 83-80 on Matt Mooney's 3-pointer and got no closer.

Mooney scored 22 and Tyler Flack had 21 points for the Coyotes.

Omaha led by 14 early in the second half before South Dakota used a 23-10 stretch to close the deficit to 69-68 with 7:41 left.

South Dakota St scores highest point total of the season

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Michael Orris scored 18 points and added eight assists and South Dakota State avenged its prior loss to Western Illinois by crushing the Leathernecks 98-65 on Wednesday night.

Five players checked in with 15-points-plus efforts for South Dakota State, and the 98-point total is its highest offensive output of the season.

Reed Tellinghuisen scored 17 points, Mike Daum and Skyler Flatten had 16 apiece, and Chris Howell chipped in 15 for the Jackrabbits (10-14, 3-6 Summit League). It is the Jackrabbits second consecutive win and the first time they have won back-to-back games since mid-December.

C.J. Duff led Western Illinois (7-13, 4-5) with 16 points, while Dalan Ancrum added 14.

South Dakota State led by double-digits throughout the second half, pushing its lead past 20 on a Flatten 3 with 7:58 left. The Leathernecks never got it back below 20.

Trump approves South Dakota disaster declaration

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — President Donald Trump has approved a disaster declaration for South Dakota because of a severe winter storm over Christmas.

Trump on Wednesday ordered federal aid to supplement state, tribal and local recovery efforts. The storm led to downed electrical lines, broken power poles and stranded drivers.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard says two tribes and 24 South Dakota counties may receive federal assistance to help recover from the storm, which did over \$9.1 million in public property damage.

The state Department of Public Safety says three deaths were associated with the storm.

The declaration included all of the tribes and counties in Daugaard's request to the president. The governor asked for the disaster declaration on Jan. 23.

South Dakota Senate sends ethics law repeal to governor

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — New ethics regulations that South Dakota voters imposed in November are all but stripped from law after the state Senate voted Wednesday to send a bill repealing them to Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

The chamber voted 27-8 to pass the repeal bill, which the Republican governor has said he supports. It would dismantle a ballot initiative that instituted a public campaign finance system, created an ethics

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commission and tightened campaign finance and lobbying laws.

The ethics crackdown is one of several November ballot measures that are now facing scrutiny in statehouses across the nation. But the South Dakota law appears to be under the most imminent danger of repeal and directly affects the very lawmakers who are weighing its fate.

Elsewhere, Maine Gov. Paul LePage has said he wants to mitigate the "severe" damage done by citizen initiatives, including a minimum wage hike, while Massachusetts and North Dakota have delayed marijuana initiatives to give officials more time to implement them.

In South Dakota, backers have criticized the Legislature for working to overturn the result of the election. The bill first passed through the House before heading to the Senate.

Many South Dakota residents feel disenfranchised, said Teryl Cruse, a massage therapist from Pierre who looked on from the Senate gallery before the vote. The 61-year-old said she wants all citizens to feel like their voices are being heard.

"When an initiative is passed by the people, it should stand," Cruse said. "Our representatives are indeed supposed to represent us, and I think we've gotten away from that."

Under the new law, voters could tap a state fund to give two credits worth \$50 each to participating political candidates. It limits lobbyist gifts to lawmakers to \$100 annually, a major change given there were previously no caps. It also calls for an independent commission to ensure state ethics laws aren't violated and administer the public campaign finance program.

Top Republican lawmakers contend those provisions are unconstitutional. They challenged the overhaul in state court, which put the initiative on hold while the case moves forward.

Senate President Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield, the bill's Senate sponsor, said the campaign for the ballot measure was based on innuendo and falsehood. Republicans have criticized advertisements during the campaign depicting lobbyists handing officials cash, calling them deceptive.

"I can tell you that I've never known anybody to accept a bribe. I've not known anybody to offer a bribe," Greenfield said. "In South Dakota, while we're not infallible, that has never been a concern."

An emergency provision means the bill would take effect immediately and couldn't be referred back it to the ballot.

GOP Sen. Lance Russell, among the few Republicans in the Legislature who opposed the bill, said it may be the most "repugnant display of raw partisan political power" that he's seen.

Lawmakers have filed several proposals that would supplant provisions of the initiative, including similar restrictions on lobbyist gifts and more limited watchdog commissions. Republican Sen. Al Novstrup said the only path forward was to repeal and replace the initiative.

"Every legislator in here is committed to doing the right thing," he said.

Ballot measure supporters have criticized the replacements as toothless.

Represent.Us, a Massachusetts-based organization that pumped funding into the South Dakota ballot measure campaign, has spent more than \$39,000 in January trying to save the law. The group has targeted Republican lawmakers with newspaper, radio and online advertisements, mail pieces and telephone calls.

Supporters of the ballot measure packed the Senate gallery to watch the debate, and an airplane circled the Capitol for hours with a banner that read "Shame on you! Respect our vote!" More than 30 people marched and protested carrying a banner or signs after the Senate approved the bill.

Rapid City resident Michelle Smith said before the vote that it's wrong that the voters' voice is being overturned. She cast a ballot for the initiative and came to the Capitol to support it.

"I've spent a lot of time saying, 'Somebody needs to do something,'" Smith said. "I'm somebody."

Review of pipeline could be beginning of end for opponents

By **BLAKE NICHOLSON** and **STEVE KARNOWSKI**, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The Army's review of a proposal to finish the Dakota Access pipeline could be the beginning of the end for opponents who have been fighting the project for nearly a year.

But the American Indian tribe at the center of the debate, the Standing Rock Sioux, vows to keep battling the pipeline in court out of fear that an oil leak could contaminate its drinking water.

Here's a look at the legal steps that remain before the last section of pipe can be laid and the final options to stop it.

WHAT ARE THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS?

On Tuesday, the acting secretary of the Army ordered a review of an earlier decision to block the last section of pipeline from being laid under a Missouri River reservoir. The move came just days after President Donald Trump issued a memo calling for reconsideration of the December decision by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Based on a discussion with the Army secretary, Robert Speer, Republican Sen. John Hoeven said Wednesday that there is no doubt in his mind that permission to finish the project will be granted.

A government assessment last summer determined that the final segment would not have a significant effect on the environment. However, then-Assistant Army Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy on Dec. 4 declined to give permission for construction to begin, saying a broader environmental study was needed.

The pipeline builder, Energy Transfer Partners, called Darcy's decision politically motivated and accused then-President Barack Obama's administration of delaying the matter until he left office. Two days before he left the White House, the Corps launched an environmental study that could take up to two years.

WHAT IS THE TRIBE LIKELY TO DO?

Army attorneys have said the environmental study could be withdrawn. Should that happen, the tribe will probably challenge the move on two fronts — that the study is necessary to preserve tribal treaty rights and that it's part of the legal process for obtaining final permission to finish the pipeline, as the Army has maintained, according to tribal attorney Jan Hasselman.

The Army cannot arbitrarily change its mind because of the change in White House administrations, said Monte Mills, co-director of the University of Montana's Indian law clinic.

Given that the Army said in December that an environmental study was necessary, Mills said, the Army would have to explain how its new decision was consistent with the legal standards it used in December and how there's a reasonable basis for change.

Otherwise the tribe could argue the reversal was "arbitrary and capricious," in violation of federal law, he said.

But Connie Rogers, a Denver attorney who specializes in federal permits, natural resources and Indian law, said the Army does have the discretion to change its mind. Since the original environmental assessment found nothing that would require an additional study, the Army was not required by law to order the fuller review and therefore can reverse course, she said.

WHAT ABOUT TREATY RIGHTS?

The tribe says under the Fort Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868, the federal government is obliged to consider a tribe's welfare when making decisions affecting the tribe.

That would be one likely argument against the Corps withdrawing the environmental study that the tribe has repeatedly demanded, Hasselman said.

Tribes have effectively used old treaty rights in other high-profile court cases. For example, a landmark ruling in Washington state in 1974 affirmed tribal fishing rights in treaties stemming from the 1850s.

"Without question, treaties, especially during modern times, have proven to be very successful legal vehicles for tribes in defense of existential threats," said Gabriel Galanda, a Seattle lawyer who represents tribes throughout the West.

When the Corps published a notice last month in the Federal Register, the agency explained that it was looking for a better understanding of how the pipeline would affect treaty rights. If the government isn't going to look at those rights now, Mills said, it will have to explain why.

LOOKING AHEAD FOR OTHER LEGAL OPTIONS

Should the Corps give permission to build the last piece of the pipeline, the tribe would immediately ask U.S. District Judge James Boasberg to temporarily ban construction while the legal issues are decided, Hasselman said.

The builder would probably fight that, and Rogers said the tribe would have to clear "a high bar" to convince the judge.

But other options to challenge the project remain. In a lawsuit it filed last year, the tribe alleges that the government broke environmental law by approving the pipeline's crossing of numerous waterways, and "the remedy is to turn off the pipeline," Hasselman said.

That lawsuit is still pending and could be the basis for more delays and courtroom arguments.

Rapid City man, 81, accused of \$17M fraud pleads not guilty

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — An 81-year-old Rapid City man accused of defrauding consumers of nearly \$17 million has pleaded not guilty.

Robert "Larry" Lytle, purveyor of the QLaser, is accused of defrauding consumers through the sale of an allegedly bogus medical device and of secretly continuing to sell the device after he was ordered to stop, the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2kqsVQb>) reported.

He pleaded not guilty on Monday to the numerous charges he faces, including conspiracy, criminal contempt and fraud.

An indictment alleges that Lytle had sold QLasers to mostly older customers for \$4,000 to \$13,000 since at least 2002. The indictment alleges that Lytle falsely claimed the devices could treat more than 200 conditions, including cancer, HIV and AIDS, heart attacks, paralysis and diabetes.

Investigators said Lytle had been given numerous warnings since 2002 from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration that selling QLasers without FDA approval was illegal.

Prosecutors are seeking the forfeiture of revenue and property gained from the alleged scheme.

Fredretta Eason, 76, an alleged associate of Lytle, also pleaded not guilty on Monday to charges of criminal contempt and aiding and abetting. Eason lived with Lytle while she partnered with him in his business activities, according to investigators.

Another alleged associate has also been arrested and charged in New York.

Lytle was released from custody on numerous conditions, including wearing an electronic monitoring device. He didn't immediately respond to the newspaper for comment.

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Woman shares tearful story of abuse during committee hearing

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A sex trafficking victim in South Dakota testified in support of a bill requiring women seeking an abortion in the state to receive contact information for an anti-sex trafficking group.

The woman told lawmakers at a Senate committee hearing Wednesday what it was like being sold for sex by her fiance.

She said she had written down the contact information from every anti-sex trafficking billboard and poster she saw while being trafficked in the Midwest and hopes the proposed measure expands the spread of that information.

The committee approved the bill after hearing the woman's testimony. No one testified against it.

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Sponsoring Rep. Lynne DiSanto, a Republican from Box Elder, says sex trafficking victims are often pressured to get abortions.

Ex-head of South Dakota's visa program gets probation, fine

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — The man who once ran South Dakota's scandal-ridden investment-for-visa program was sentenced Wednesday to probation and a fine after reaching an agreement with prosecutors in the high-profile financial misconduct case.

Joop Bollen, 53, pleaded guilty to one of five felony counts and was sentenced to two years of probation and a \$2,000 fine, Attorney General Marty Jackley said in a statement.

Bollen, of Aberdeen, pleaded not guilty in June to the felony charges that accused him of diverting more than \$1.2 million from an account created as part of a contract with the state to protect it against costs or liability from South Dakota's EB-5 visa program. Authorities said he put back most of the money.

Bollen's attorney, Reed Rasmussen, said the plea agreement was fair after the judge denied a motion to dismiss Bollen's indictment. If Bollen successfully completes the probation, his record will be sealed and he will not be a convicted felon, Rasmussen said.

"I think he still feels that the prosecution should never have been brought, but since it was, that we had to deal with it," Rasmussen said.

Bollen declined to comment when reached by The Associated Press by telephone at his home.

The charges dealt with a company Bollen founded that had handled South Dakota's participation in the EB-5 visa program.

The federal visa program allows people to seek U.S. residency if they invest at least \$500,000 in approved projects. Bollen first led South Dakota's participation in the program as a state employee and later as the head of SDRC Inc., the private company he founded. The program was privatized in 2009 and turned over to SDRC until the state took over management in 2013.

The investment program came under fire that year after a former state official associated with it killed himself as felony theft charges were being prepared against him.

The state's legal documents accused Bollen of improperly transferring money out of an account that his company was supposed to maintain. In at least one case, the money was subsequently used to buy an Egyptian artifact, according to a court document.

A court affidavit said most of the money was repaid to the account, but a state investigator said in the document that a nearly \$167,000 transfer didn't appear to have been refunded.

Jackley said he's pleased that Bollen has accepted responsibility and admitted wrongdoing for the misuse of funds related to the EB-5 program and his company, SDRC.

"This matter has been resolved favorably for the State, and Bollen has agreed to cooperate in the future if needed," Jackley said.

Broken waterline floods Deadwood hotel

DEADWOOD, S.D. (AP) — A broken waterline has sent more than 70,000 gallons rushing through the first floor of the Deadwood Comfort Inn & Suites.

The general manager of the 69-room hotel and casino, Tracy Island, says she got the call Monday night and arrived to a scene of chaos and torrents of water coming out of six different doors.

Island says the water had knocked down two walls and created an "indoor lake" on the main floor. It took workers an hour to shut off the flow.

Deadwood Volunteer Fire Department executive officer Kevin Hawki says the leak started in a mechanical room where the main 6-inch waterline had broken.

The Rapid City Journal reports (<http://bit.ly/2kSKVjx>) that there is at least \$60,000 worth of damage to guest room furnishings and the phone system.

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Bill making it harder to get amendments on ballot on hold

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill that would make it harder to put constitutional amendments before South Dakota voters has been put on hold.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted Wednesday to table the proposal. It would significantly increase the number of signatures required to place amendments on the ballot.

The vote came after the bill's sponsor asked to withdraw it. The sponsor, Republican Sen. Jeffrey Partridge, declined to comment to The Associated Press.

The bill would change the signature requirement from at least 10 percent of the total votes cast for governor in the last election to 10 percent of all registered voters. It could be brought up again.

Republicans have discussed changes to the initiative process after an election season with multiple ballot questions that brought in millions of dollars from out-of-state groups.

Midwest economic survey suggests more improvement in January

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Results from a monthly survey of business supply managers released Wednesday suggest economic conditions continue to improve in nine Midwest and Plains states, and that confidence in the regional economy is at its highest level in six years.

The Mid-America Business Conditions Index report said the overall economic index for the region rose to 54.7 in January from 53.1 in December and 46.5 in November. It's the highest figure since February 2015.

"This is the third consecutive month the index has increased, and (it) points to an improving regional manufacturing economy," said Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey. "I expect this to generate even healthier growth for both manufacturing and nonmanufacturing for the first half of 2017."

The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth, while a score below indicates decline. The survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Looking ahead six months, economic optimism rose to 69.5 in January from 63.3 in December. It's the highest confidence reading recorded in six years, Goss said.

The January employment index soared to its highest level since August 2014, hitting 57.0, compared with December's 50.9. Goss said the key to regional job growth in the first half of 2017 will be improvements in agriculture and energy commodity prices.

The prices-paid index jumped to 74.2 from 70.4 in December, reflecting rising inflationary pressures at the wholesale level.

"This is the highest wholesale inflation gauge that we have recorded since April 2014," Goss said.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics releases its consumer price index on Feb. 15. Goss said if the overall reading continues to move higher, he expects the Federal Reserve to increase short-term interest rates in the first quarter of this year.

Man accused of injuring officer enters not guilty pleas

TYNDALL, S.D. (AP) — A man accused of striking a Tyndall police officer with his vehicle, dragging him across a parking lot and driving away has pleaded not guilty to charges.

Travis McPeck, of Sioux City, Iowa, is charged with two counts of aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer.

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Court documents say Officer Kelly Young suffered broken ribs, cuts and an injured ankle in the Aug. 6 incident in a retail parking lot in Tyndall.

The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2jVr16t>) reports the charges say Young had stopped McPeek for a traffic violation when McPeek put his pickup in reverse, dragged Young across the pavement and drove away.

The 36-year-old McPeek was apprehended in December in Mesa, Arizona. He entered the not guilty pleas during a court appearance Tuesday.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

Midwest economy: January state-by-state glance

By The Associated Press

The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates an expanding economy over the next three to six months.

Here are the state-by-state results for January:

Arkansas: Arkansas' overall index for January rose to 55.3 from December's 53.7. Components of the index were new orders at 56.2, production or sales at 56.2, delivery lead time at 53.0, inventories at 53.3, and employment at 57.8. "Expansions among nondurable-goods producers more than offset continuing weak conditions reported by durable-goods manufacturers in the state," Goss said.

Iowa: The overall index for Iowa inched up to 51.8 in January from 51.7 in December. Components were new orders at 55.1, production or sales at 55.1, delivery lead time at 51.8, employment at 54.2, and inventories at 42.8. "Iowa durable-goods manufacturers, including metal producers and agriculture equipment manufacturers, continue to shed jobs. On the other hand, nondurable-goods producers are adding jobs, but at a slow pace," he said.

Kansas: The Kansas overall index rose to 53.2 last month from 51.1 in December. Index components were new orders at 55.5, production or sales at 55.9, delivery lead time at 52.3, employment at 55.7 and inventories at 47.0. "Durable-goods manufacturers in the state, including machinery producers, are experiencing pullbacks in the economic activity. On the other hand, nondurable-goods producers, including food processors, are expanding business activity," Goss said.

Minnesota: The overall index for Minnesota hit 54.7 last month, compared with 52.3 in December. Components of the index were new orders at 55.4, production or sales at 57.1, delivery lead time at 52.8, inventories at 51.5 and employment at 57.2. "Minnesota durable-goods manufacturers, including metal producers and agriculture equipment manufacturers, continue to shed jobs," Goss said. On the other hand, nondurable-goods producers, including food processors, are adding jobs at a solid pace.

Missouri: January's overall index dropped to 53.7 last month in Missouri from 57.1 in December. Components of the index were new orders at 54.9, production or sales at 55.2, delivery lead time at 51.6, inventories at 53.4 and employment at 53.8. "Missouri's durable-goods manufacturers, including machinery producers, are experiencing pullbacks in the economic activity. On the other hand, nondurable-goods producers, including food processors, are expanding business activity," said Goss.

Nebraska: The January overall index for Nebraska rose to 56.9 in January from 55.3 in December. Components of the index were new orders at 56.5, production or sales at 57.1, delivery lead time at 53.6, inventories at 58.1 and employment at 53.6. "Both durable- and nondurable-goods manufacturers expanded business activity in the state but at a slow pace for the month. Nebraska food processors, on the other hand, advanced at a healthy pace," he said.

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North Dakota: North Dakota's overall index fell to 49.7 from 51.0 in December. Components were new orders at 54.7, production or sales at 54.1, delivery lead time at 51.1, employment at 52.1 and inventories at 36.7. "North Dakota's durable-goods manufacturers, including machinery producers, are experiencing pullbacks in the economic activity. On the other hand, nondurable-goods producers, including food processors, are expanding business activity, but at a slow pace," Goss said.

Oklahoma: The state's overall index increased to 52.3 last month from 48.8 in December. Components were new orders at 55.5, production or sales at 51.4, delivery lead time at 52.2, inventories at 46.7 and employment at 55.6, "Oklahoma's durable-goods manufacturers, especially metal producers, are shedding jobs and business activity. On the other hand, nondurable-goods manufacturers, including food processors, continue to expand business activity," he said.

South Dakota: South Dakota's overall index rose to 57.2 from 56.5 in December. Index components were new orders at 56.9, production or sales at 57.0, delivery lead time at 53.6, inventories at 58.8 and employment at 59.7. South Dakota's manufacturing sector, especially nondurable-goods producers, is expanding at a solid pace even as heavy manufacturers reduce hiring, Goss said.

Senate eases regulations on grain buying, warehousing

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Senate has approved a proposal to ease regulatory restrictions on grain buyers and warehouses in South Dakota.

Public Utilities Commission spokesman Chris Nelson says the bill streamlines the process for getting access to a bond that covers grain buying or warehousing.

The Daily Republic (<http://bit.ly/2kqsC7Q>) says the commission would take over that process and make sure grain farmers get their payments promptly. Currently farmers have to file multiple times to get paid under that scenario.

The legislation moves on to the House.

Information from: The Daily Republic, <http://www.mitchellrepublic.com>

More Delaware inmates released, 2 workers still held hostage

By RANDALL CHASE, Associated Press

SMYRNA, Del. (AP) — Authorities say 14 more inmates have been released at a Delaware prison where inmates are still holding two staffers hostage.

A news release from the Delaware Department of Correction says the 14 were released about 12:30 a.m. Thursday and are being held elsewhere at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna. More than two dozen inmates and two other workers were released Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, authorities continued negotiations for the release of the last two of four corrections department workers taken hostage by inmates on Wednesday.

The inmates told a local newspaper that concerns about their treatment and the leadership of the United States had prompted their actions.

The hostage situation drew dozens of officers and law enforcement vehicles and prompted a statewide lockdown of all prisons. One hostage was released Wednesday afternoon and another was released hours later.

The news release says 46 inmates have been released from the building since the hostage situation began, including the 14 released early Thursday.

A preliminary investigation suggests the disturbance began about 10:30 a.m. when a correctional officer inside Building C, which houses more than 100 inmates, radioed for immediate assistance, Delaware State Police spokesman Sgt. Richard Bratz said. Other officers responded to help, and the employees were taken hostage, he said.

Bratz initially said five employees were taken hostage, but authorities at a later news conference said

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the number had been revised to four after one person thought to be among the hostages was found in another part of the prison.

Robert Coupe, secretary of the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security, said authorities don't know "the dynamics of the takeover" or whether inmates had been held against their will.

One of the freed employees was taken to a hospital with injuries that were not life-threatening, authorities said. The condition of the second wasn't immediately available.

Earlier in the day, inmates reached out to The News Journal in Wilmington in two phone calls to explain their actions and make demands. Prisoners funneled the calls to the paper with the help of one inmate's fiancée and another person's mother. The mother told the paper that her son was among the hostages.

In that call, an inmate said their reasons "for doing what we're doing" included "Donald Trump. Everything that he did. All the things that he's doing now. We know that the institution is going to change for the worse."

That caller said education for prisoners was the inmates' priority. They also said they want effective rehabilitation for all prisoners and information about how money is allocated to prisons.

Coupe said authorities had been communicating with the hostage-takers via radio. He also noted that inmates in Building C have access to television and could be watching the news conference live.

"We'd like to tell them we want to resolve this peacefully," he said.

Coupe declined to comment when asked about the phone calls to The News Journal but said a dialogue about issues at the prison could happen later.

"Once this matter is resolved safely, then that will be the time to talk, if the inmates want to talk about conditions, privileges, those types of things," he said.

Delaware Gov. John Carney spoke briefly, saying he had talked with the hostages' families.

"As you can imagine, it's been very difficult for them as well," the new Democratic governor said.

According to the department's website, the prison is Delaware's largest correctional facility for men, with about 2,500 inmates. It houses minimum, medium and maximum security inmates, and also houses Kent County detainees awaiting trial.

It employs 1,500 corrections officers, according to Bruce Rogers, counsel for the Correctional Officers Association of Delaware.

In 2004, an inmate at the Smyrna prison raped a counselor and took her hostage for nearly seven hours, according to an Associated Press report at the time. A department sharpshooter later shot and killed 45-year-old Scott Miller, according to the report, ending the standoff.

Associated Press writers Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia, and David Dishneau in Hagerstown, Maryland, contributed to this report.

Trump tweets that Iran is 'on notice' for firing missile

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says Iran was on the verge of collapse until the U.S. gave it a "lifeline" in the form of the Iran deal.

The president tweeted Thursday, "Iran has been formally PUT ON NOTICE for firing a ballistic missile." He adds, "Should have been thankful for the terrible deal the U.S. made with them!"

Trump was repeating comments made by National Security Adviser Michael Flynn,

Trump also tweeted, "Iran was on its last legs and ready to collapse until the U.S. came along and gave it a life-line in the form of the Iran Deal: \$150 billion."

Flynn said Wednesday the "Obama administration failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions" and put Iran "on notice," without elaborating on what actions may be taken.

Breitbart editor's Berkeley talk nixed amid violent protest

By JOCELYN GECKER, Associated Press

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — A crowd protesting a far-right commentator's appearance at the University of California at Berkeley hurled smoke bombs, broke windows and sparked a massive bonfire, prompting officials to call off the event.

The decision came two hours before Wednesday's talk by Milo Yiannopoulos (yuh-NAH'-poh-lihs), a polarizing editor of Breitbart News, after some 1,500 people had gathered outside the venue.

But officials said it was a smaller group of protesters dressed in black and in hooded sweatshirts that showed up as night fell to break windows, throw smoke bombs and flares, and start the raging blaze outside the building.

"This was a group of agitators who were masked up, throwing rocks, commercial grade fireworks and Molotov cocktails at officers," said UC Berkeley Police Chief Margo Bennet.

Bennet said police determined at that point they couldn't guarantee security, canceled the event and evacuated Yiannopoulos from the building.

There were no immediate reports of arrests or serious injuries, she said.

President Donald Trump took to Twitter on Thursday morning to comment, tweeting: "If U.C. Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view - NO FEDERAL FUNDS?"

Prior to the burst of violence, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators carrying signs that read "Hate Speech Is Not Free Speech" had been protesting the appearance for hours.

As the evening wore on, crowds of protesters cleared away from outside the building. By 8 p.m. the crowd had thinned and at least 100 protesters that remained danced to a brass band playing music and marched off campus and into a main avenue.

Yiannopoulos, a 32-year-old right-wing provocateur, is a vocal supporter of Trump and a self-proclaimed internet troll whose comments have been criticized as racist, misogynist, anti-Muslim and white supremacist. He was banned from Twitter after leading a harassment campaign against "Ghostbusters" actress Leslie Jones.

His visit to Berkeley was sponsored by the campus Republican club. The university has stressed it did not invite him and does not endorse his ideas but is committed to free speech and rejected calls to cancel the event.

"The event has been cancelled," Yiannopoulos posted on his Facebook page. "I'll let you know more when the facts become clear. One thing we do know for sure: the Left is absolutely terrified of free speech and will do literally anything to shut it down."

The Berkeley College Republicans said its "constitutional right to free speech was silenced by criminals and thugs."

"Their success is a defeat for civilized society and the free exchange of ideas on college campuses across America," it said in a statement.

The university, which had requested assistance from police in nine UC campuses, sent a notice to all students earlier Wednesday that warned of crowds near the student union, where the 500-seat, sold-out event was scheduled.

Yiannopoulos' talks have sparked protests, shouting matches and occasional violence at stops around the country. A man was shot and wounded at protests outside his Jan. 21 talk at the University of Washington.

Rowdy protests at UC Davis Jan. 13 prompted campus Republicans to cancel his appearance at the last minute. His final stop was supposed to be UCLA on Thursday but the invitation was rescinded, making Berkeley his grand finale.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. TRUMP'S CLASH WITH AUSTRALIA STRAINS ALLIANCE

An irritable tweet the president fired off about Australia, and a report of an angry phone call between the nations' leaders, prove the new U.S. commander in chief has changed the playing field for even America's staunchest allies.

2. AMERICA AND IMMIGRATION: IT'S COMPLICATED

Trump's ban on nationals from seven majority-Muslim nations is far from the first time the golden door has slammed shut.

3. ALEPPO PART OF DARK SHADOW OVER SYRIA'S FUTURE

The vast destruction and desolation in Syria's largest city point to the daunting fact that no one has any good answers on how to rebuild after the devastation wreaked by six years of ruinous war.

4. RED AND BLUE STATES AT ODDS OVER TRUMP'S 'SANCTUARY CITY' ORDER

California is pushing for a statewide sanctuary that would prohibit law enforcement from cooperating with federal immigration authorities, while a fellow U.S.-Mexico border state, Texas, is seeking to withhold funding from cities with the policies

5. WHOSE REPUTATION IS IN TATTERS

Francois Fillon's chances at winning France's presidency nosedive amid a string of allegations that he's not what the upstanding family man he painted himself to be.

6. GENDER GAP LOOMS IN U.S. HEALTH CARE

From a return to higher premiums for women to gaps in coverage for birth control and breast pumps, the Republican push to repeal "Obamacare" already is raising concerns that women could be hit hard.

7. EVICTION AT UNAUTHORIZED WEST BANK OUTPOST NEARS END

About 200 protesters are barricaded inside a synagogue in Amona - several hundred police officers are preparing to remove them.

8. WHERE CROWD CONTROL IS HOT TOPIC

The National Park Service is starting a new reservation process to control the throngs of tourists who travel to Maui's tallest peak to watch the sun rise each morning.

9. BREITBART EDITOR'S BERKELEY TALK NIXED AMID VIOLENT PROTEST

Some 1,500 people had gathered outside the venue, but officials said it was a smaller group of protesters that showed up as night fell to break windows, throw smoke bombs and flares, and start the raging blaze outside the building.

10. STANFORD COACH NEARING MILESTONE

Tara VanDerveer is poised to become just the second NCAA women's coach to enter the 1,000 wins club, alongside the late Pat Summitt.

DeVos nomination on thin ice with 2 GOP senators opposed

By MARIA DANILOVA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump's nomination of school choice activist Betsy DeVos as education secretary is on thin ice after two Republican senators vowed to vote against her.

DeVos, a billionaire Republican donor who spent more than two decades promoting charter schools, has emerged as one of Trump's most controversial Cabinet picks facing fierce opposition from Democrats, teachers unions and civil rights activists. With Sen. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska in opposition, the nomination could die if DeVos loses the support of one more Republican — and all Democrats vote against her.

Murkowski said she believed DeVos has much to learn about public education.

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"I have serious concerns about a nominee to be secretary of education who has been so involved on one side of the equation, so immersed in the push for vouchers that she may be unaware of what actually is successful within the public schools and also what is broken and how to fix them," Murkowski said.

If all other GOP senators support DeVos, and all Democrats oppose her, she would end up with a 50-50 vote in the Senate and Vice President Mike Pence would have to break the tie to confirm her. A vote is expected in the coming days.

Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, the Republican chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, praised DeVos and expressed confidence that she would be confirmed.

"Mrs. DeVos believes in our children, their teachers and parents — she believes in the local school board instead of the national school board," Alexander said in a statement. "She's committed to public education, and there's no better example of that than her work on the most important reform of public schools in the last 30 years — public charter schools."

White House press secretary Sean Spicer said he wasn't concerned about the defections by Collins and Murkowski.

"I have 100 percent confidence she will be the next secretary of education. She is an unbelievably qualified educator and advocate for students, teachers, parents," he said after the two senators announced their opposition.

In addition to the statements of opposition by the two Republican senators, a billionaire philanthropist and public education backer came out against her.

Eli Broad sent a letter to senators urging her defeat, saying DeVos is "unprepared and unqualified for the position." He also said that if she were confirmed, "much of the good work that has been accomplished to improve public education for all of America's children could be undone."

Democrats have vigorously opposed DeVos, questioning her commitment to public education, her overall qualifications to lead the Education Department and her views on LGBT rights, the needs of students with disabilities and potential conflicts of interest arising from her business holdings.

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, expressed hope Wednesday that other Republicans would also reconsider their support for DeVos.

"The more people get to know how ill-equipped Betsy DeVos is to strengthen public schools, how disconnected she is from public schools, and how her record is focused on pursuing for-profit charters and vouchers and not on helping children, the more the people who believe in the importance of public education are joining to oppose her," Weingarten said.

DeVos, 59, is the wife of Dick DeVos, the heir to the Amway marketing fortune. She has spent more than two decades advocating for charter schools in her home state of Michigan, as well as promoting conservative religious values.

This story has been corrected to reflect last name of philanthropist is Broad, not Brown

Associated Press writers Erica Werner, Jennifer C. Kerr and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

More than 120 injured in fire at Philippines factory complex

GENERAL TRIAS, Philippines (AP) — More than 120 workers, including two Japanese, were injured and at least one was missing in a fire at a huge factory south of the Philippine capital that sent thousands of employees running to safety, an official said Thursday.

The fire at House Technology Industries was under control but had not been fully extinguished nearly 24 hours after it started in General Trias town in Cavite province south of Manila, Gov. Jesus Crispin Remulla said.

Firefighters hoped to enter and inspect the gutted factory, which occupies six hectares (15 acres) of land, later Thursday.

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About four of the injured remained in critical condition, Remulla told reporters, adding that some employees jumped from windows to escape the blaze at the three-story building, where pre-fabricated house parts are manufactured for export to Japan.

"We can't conclude anything as long as the fire is still there and we have not seen any casualties," Remulla said on the possibility of workers being trapped in the overnight inferno. But he said "we're ready for the worst-case scenario."

The fire apparently started when a machine malfunctioned and triggered small explosions in a section with combustible materials as two shifts of workers of about 3,500 each were changing places, he said.

Massive amounts of black smoke billowed in the night sky as red flames raged through the factory, which employs about 15,000 workers and is the largest in Cavite province, he said.

Company officials were doing a count to find out if any more people were missing at the factory, located in a special economic zone in General Trias, about 26 kilometers (16 miles) south of Manila.

In 2015, a fire that rapidly spread in a rubber slipper factory in a northern Manila suburb killed 72 people, prompting then President Benigno Aquino III to order a thorough inspection of some 300,000 factories in metropolitan Manila alone. He ordered charges to be filed against the owners of the Kentex Manufacturing Corp. and local officials, who he said ignored the factory's failure to meet safety requirements.

The Kentex fire was one of the worst in the country after a 1996 disco blaze that killed 162 people in Manila.

US puts Iran 'on notice' after missile test, won't elaborate

By VIVIAN SALAMA and JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House has issued a cryptic warning that the U.S. will act against Iran unless it stops testing ballistic missiles and supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen, but declined to say what retaliatory actions the U.S. would pursue.

Michael Flynn, President Donald Trump's national security adviser, forcefully denounced Iran's behavior in his first public remarks since Trump took office. He accused Iran of threatening U.S. allies and spreading instability throughout the Middle East while faulting the Obama administration for doing too little to stop the Islamic Republic.

"As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice," Flynn said from the White House podium.

On notice for what, Flynn didn't say. Senior Trump administration officials said they were actively considering a "range of options" including economic measures and increased support for Iran's regional adversaries. The officials, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, declined repeatedly to say whether military action was being considered.

Later Wednesday, Trump tweeted: "Iran is rapidly taking over more and more of Iraq even after the U.S. has squandered three trillion dollars there. Obvious long ago!"

The warning was an early manifestation of Trump's promise of a tougher American approach to Iran. Yet administration officials emphasized that their allegations were unrelated to Iran's obligations under the Iran nuclear deal that President Barack Obama and world leaders negotiated. Though Flynn noted Trump has criticized that deal, officials declined to say whether Trump planned to follow through on his campaign pledge to renegotiate it.

"The Obama administration failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions — including weapons transfers, support for terrorism and other violations of international norms," Flynn said.

The White House also faulted Iran for backing Houthi rebels in Yemen who on Tuesday claimed a successful missile strike against a warship belonging to a Saudi-led coalition fighting to reinstall Yemen's internationally recognized government. The media arm of the Shiite rebels said the vessel was believed to belong to the Saudi Arabian navy.

Administration officials said Iran was providing key support by arming, training and financing the rebels, with a goal of leveraging its relationship with the Houthis to "build a long-term presence in Yemen."

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The White House said the goal in putting Iran "on notice" was to signal to Tehran that it needed to rethink its behavior. Flynn said Iran specifically violated the U.N.'s ban on "activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology."

Iran's Defense Minister Gen. Hossein Dehghan confirmed Wednesday that Iran conducted a missile test, but did not say when the test was carried out or specify the type of missile. He insisted it wasn't a violation of U.N. resolutions.

The U.S. said the test was of a medium-range ballistic missile. It ended with a "failed" re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, said a U.S. defense official, who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Reports of the test emerged after Trump signed an executive order last week temporarily suspending immigration from Iran and six other majority-Muslim countries.

On one point, the U.S. and Iran agree: The test didn't violate the nuclear deal itself.

Ballistic missile testing wasn't explicitly included in the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers. But as part of the final negotiations, Iran agreed to an eight-year extension of a U.N. ban on ballistic missile development. The U.N. Security Council later endorsed the agreement, calling on Iran not to carry out such tests. But Iran has flouted the prohibition regularly in the past year-and-a-half, drawing sanctions from the U.S. but also diplomatic cover from Russia.

At America's request, the U.N. Security Council held a session Tuesday to address the missile test. The council referred the matter to its committee on Iran and asked for an investigation.

Iran has long boasted of having missiles that can travel 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles), putting much of the Middle East, including Israel, in range. Such capability would also put U.S. bases in the region in danger. Iran says its missiles are key to deterring a U.S. or Israeli attack.

In March, Iran test-fired two ballistic missiles. One was emblazoned with the phrase "Israel must be wiped out" in Hebrew, sparking international outcry.

Associated Press writer Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Risk to women's health benefits seen in health law repeal

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and KELLI KENNEDY, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — From a return to higher premiums for women to gaps in coverage for birth control and breast pumps, the Republican push to repeal the Obama-era health care law already is raising concerns that women could be hit hard.

The 2010 law ended a common industry practice of charging women more than men for policies purchased directly from an insurer. It made maternity and newborn care a required benefit for individual market health plans. And it set a list of preventive services to be provided at no extra cost to women, including birth control and breast pumps used by nursing mothers. That preventive care requirement also applies to most employer plans, which serve a majority of U.S. adults.

Nearly half of pregnancies are unplanned, and prior to "Obamacare" some women would get pregnant only to learn that their insurance did not cover maternity and delivery, said Dr. John Meigs, a longtime family practitioner in the small town of Centerville, Ala.

"A lot of women were delaying their prenatal care until they could figure out what to do," said Meigs, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Pregnancy "is one of those things that ought to be covered, because it happens."

Democrats are keying in on the issue. "We don't want our country going backward when it comes to women's health," said Sen. Patty Murray, ranking Democrat on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee.

Women are widely seen as having benefited from the health law. In a recent AP-NORC poll, 44 percent said they thought women were better off as a result of the Affordable Care Act, while only 24 percent

said women were worse off.

"The ACA set minimum levels of benefits that health plans have to cover and many are highly used, or exclusively used by women," said Usha Ranji, a health policy expert with the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. "Repeal and replace could take away that minimum level of benefits, which includes really commonly used services like contraception and maternity care."

Nashville-based singer Rachel Potter worries about what it could mean for her. In the past, she's been uninsured, but she says she was lucky to be covered under the ACA when she unexpectedly became pregnant last year.

Bleeding early on and other complications sent her to the doctor's office frequently.

"We were able to monitor the pregnancy really closely," said Potter. "I was able to go to an amazing OB-GYN and I wouldn't have had access to that care if I had not been on this insurance." Her son Jude was born in December and is already on the road with her.

Potter's medical bill came to more than \$40,000 but she only paid about \$2,000 of that.

She's now thinking about getting a long lasting form of birth control while her insurer is still required to cover it at no charge to her. "I don't know the future of the health insurance situation," said Potter.

A Trump administration spokesman says speculation about components of an "Obamacare" replacement is premature.

Recently introduced legislation that seeks a middle path on health care would keep some of the Obama-era requirements, but make others a state option.

The bill co-authored by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, would allow states to keep the ACA or substitute an alternative with fewer federal requirements.

Under that approach, insurance plans in states that pick the alternative would not be required to cover maternity and newborn care. However, plans in all states would have to cover the ACA's preventive benefits, including birth control. Collins staff said the draft bill is a starting point.

Any changes are most likely to affect the estimated 18 million people who buy policies directly from an insurer, a group in which women tend to outnumber men. Most people covered by employers have broader benefits and are less likely to be affected.

"Obamacare" critics argue that required benefits aren't the only basis for judging the value of a policy. Strip away costly federal requirements, and premiums will come down, they maintain. Women as well as men would benefit from lower-cost options.

Ranji says the health law made significant improvements on women's health. Before the law:

- Pregnancy, a prior cesarean-section, a history of domestic violence, or problems with depression could be deemed a pre-existing condition, triggering restrictions on coverage or higher premiums.

- About one-third of plans on the individual insurance market charged women between the age of 25-40 premiums at least 30 percent higher than men of the same age.

- Only about 12 percent of plans were available directly to individuals, included maternity care.

- About 20 percent of women of childbearing age covered by large employers spent some of their own money on birth control pills. Currently it's fewer than 4 percent.

— Kennedy reported from Miami.

Red, blue states split over Trump's 'sanctuary city' order

By ANDREW SELSKY, Associated Press

SALEM, Ore. (AP) — President Donald Trump's promised crackdown on "sanctuary cities" has triggered divergent actions from blue and red states, revealing the deep national divide on immigration as some move to follow his order and others break with the U.S. government to protect immigrants in the country illegally.

California, the nation's largest state, is pushing for a statewide sanctuary that would prohibit law en-

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forcement from cooperating with federal immigration authorities, while a fellow U.S.-Mexico border state, Texas, is seeking to withhold funding from cities with the policies.

Trump's recent executive orders threatening to withhold federal funding from communities with sanctuary policies and calling for a border wall have produced widespread protests and fears that more immigration restrictions are in the future. The president's supporters have hailed the efforts.

Cities have mostly taken up sanctuary laws. There's no official definition, but often they tell police not to inquire about the immigration status of those they arrest or they decline requests from immigration officials to keep defendants in custody while they await deportation.

But liberal states like California would not be the first to block police from enforcing federal immigration law. Oregon pioneered statewide sanctuary in a 1987 law, when immigrant workers and their families were sometimes housed in appalling conditions despite their importance to agricultural profits.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said she will enforce that law.

"They mow our lawns. They pick our grapes," Brown said last week. "They take care of our children and they take care of our seniors, and I want to make sure they feel welcome in Oregon."

Advocates say the laws ensure people in the country illegally will come forward to report crimes without fear of deportation. Opponents cite concerns about crime, including the shooting death of Kate Steinle in San Francisco. Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez, who was in the country illegally after multiple deportations to his native Mexico, has been charged with murder.

San Francisco reaffirmed its commitment to sanctuary polices by suing Trump on Tuesday, the same day California state senators advanced legislation that would provide money for lawyers for immigrants facing deportation and hamper any attempt to create a Muslim registry.

The state is home to an estimated 2.3 million immigrants in the country illegally.

"We want to make sure that police officers don't abandon their beat and go enforce immigration laws," said Senate President Pro Tem Kevin de Leon of Los Angeles.

Some California Republicans fought back. State Sen. Jeff Stone voted against the measure, saying, "I think this bill is making it that much more difficult for the federal authorities to get the most dangerous criminals that we want to deport to keep our communities safe."

Three states away, Texas' Republican governor, Greg Abbott, embraced Trump's order, saying the administration is showing the potential to secure the border.

He instructed lawmakers to send him a bill by June that punishes local governments that don't cooperate with federal immigration authorities. Abbott wants to withhold taxpayer money to cities that don't detain immigrants and to remove locally elected officials if they don't comply.

Travis County Sheriff Sally Hernandez, who runs the jails in the liberal enclave of Austin, plans this week to stop honoring all federal immigration requests to detain suspects and only comply with requests to hold those accused of murder, aggravated sexual assault and human trafficking. Abbott responded by blocking \$1.5 million in criminal justice grants to the county.

Idaho also is moving to enforce Trump's order, though the state has no sanctuary cities. A bill this week would hold back taxpayer money.

The actions come in a different political climate from when Oregon instituted its statewide protections. The governor's office said Oregon has not faced any federal reprisals over the years but that it could change.

Gov. Brown said she would fight for Oregon's law, including taking legal action, if Washington tries to withhold federal funding as leverage.

The law means immigrants can go to police when they are a victim of a crime or witness one, without fearing deportation, said Jann Carson, associate director of the ACLU of Oregon.

"The biggest result is that Oregon police have not participated in INS, now ICE, raids on migrant farms, apartment buildings, roadblocks," Carson said.

She said immigrants here illegally can't receive welfare benefits but that many pay taxes. The Social Security Administration estimated immigrants and their employers paid \$13 billion in payroll taxes in 2010.

Former lawmaker Dick Springer helped pass Oregon's measure 30 years ago. He said it was driven by unsanitary and crowded living conditions for migrant workers and the agriculture industry's dependence

on those workers.

"We were aware of really atrocious conditions for farmworkers ... 50 people would be living in a barn," Springer said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

The 1987 measure received bipartisan support. Asked if it makes Oregon a sanctuary state, Springer said that was his intent.

"We're not going to hassle people that want to make a living and are contributing to our economy," he said, choking up with emotion. "They have a very strong work ethic. They have commitment to faith and to family. Those are the families we cherish, embrace and welcome."

Associated Press reporters Jonathan J. Cooper in Sacramento, California; Kimberlee Kruesi in Boise, Idaho; Paul J. Weber and David Saleh Rauf in Austin, Texas, contributed to this report.

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>

Australian PM, Trump offer mixed messages on refugee deal

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australia's prime minister insisted Thursday that a deal struck with the Obama administration that would allow mostly Muslim refugees rejected by Australia to be resettled in the United States was still on, despite President Donald Trump dubbing the agreement "dumb" and vowing to review it.

The conflicting messages came hours after The Washington Post published a story detailing a tense exchange between Trump and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull during their first telephone call as national leaders.

The newspaper reported that during the call, an angry Trump dubbed the agreement "the worst deal ever" and accused Turnbull of seeking to export the "next Boston bombers" — a reference to Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, U.S. citizens born in Kyrgyzstan, who set off two bombs at the 2013 Boston marathon.

Turnbull declined to comment on the report, which also said Trump abruptly ended the expected hour-long conversation after 25 minutes as the Australian attempted to steer the conversation to other topics.

"It's better that these things — these conversations — are conducted candidly, frankly, privately," Turnbull told reporters. Later, however, he denied during an interview with Sydney radio station 2GB that Trump had hung up on him, saying the conversation had ended "courteously."

Turnbull told reporters the strength of the relationship between the two nations was evident in that Trump had agreed to honor the deal to resettle refugees from among around 1,600 asylum seekers, most of whom are on island camps on the Pacific nations of Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Australia has refused to accept them and instead pays for them to be housed on the impoverished islands.

"I can assure you the relationship is very strong," Turnbull said. "The fact we received the assurance that we did, the fact that it was confirmed, the very extensive engagement we have with the new administration underlines the closeness of the alliance. But as Australians know me very well: I stand up for Australia in every forum — public or private."

Yet shortly after Turnbull made those comments to reporters, Trump took to Twitter to slam the deal.

"Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why?" Trump tweeted. "I will study this dumb deal!"

Australians — accustomed to the friendly relationship they have long enjoyed with the U.S. — were transfixed by the drama. The Washington Post story shot to the top of the nation's trending topics on Twitter, and was plastered across the top of Australia's major news sites.

The country's news networks launched running commentaries on it, debating how Turnbull should respond and what the spat meant for the future of the longtime allies' relationship.

Trump, who a day before the conversation with Turnbull had signed an executive order suspending the admission of refugees, complained during the call that he was "going to get killed" politically by the deal,

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the newspaper reported, citing anonymous officials.

"I don't want these people," Trump reportedly said. Trump also told Turnbull that he had spoken to four world leaders that day and that: "This is the worst call by far."

Trump told Turnbull that it was "my intention" to honor the agreement, a phrase designed to leave the president wriggle room to back out of the deal, the newspaper reported.

There have been mixed messages from Washington all week on the state of the agreement.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer confirmed on Wednesday that Trump had agreed to honor the deal.

But a White House statement sent to Australian Broadcasting Corp. on Thursday said: "The president is still considering whether or not he will move forward with this deal at this time."

The U.S. State Department said in a statement later Thursday that the United States would honor the agreement "out of respect for close ties to our Australian ally and friend."

"President Trump's decision to honor the refugee agreement has not changed and Spokesman Spicer's comments stand," the State Department said.

The ABC spoke to senior Australian government sources who said The Washington Post report was "substantially accurate."

Australian officials said the conversation was "robust" and "shorter than expected," while one minister told the ABC that "Trump hates this deal."

Opposition leader Bill Shorten called on Turnbull to be open about his interaction with Trump, saying The Washington Post version of the call was worrying.

"We shouldn't be finding out about what's happening to Australian policy through the news of foreign countries," Shorten said.

Turnbull has likened himself to Trump in that both are wealthy businessmen who came to politics late in life. Turnbull also has a reputation for blunt conversation and tough negotiations behind closed doors.

Turnbull has resisted pressure this week to join other Western leaders in condemning Trump's temporary ban of immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries.

"When I have frank advice to give to an American president, I give it privately, as good friends should, as wise prime ministers do when they want to ensure they are best able to protect Australians and Australia's national interest," Turnbull told reporters on Tuesday.

Some observers suspect Turnbull has held his tongue because he is grateful to Trump for agreeing to honor the refugee deal.

Little heard in public, Bannon is quiet power in Oval Office

By NANCY BENAC and JILL COLVIN, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — People are beginning to pay more attention to the man behind the curtain.

It is a mark of Steve Bannon's extraordinary sway in the Trump White House that a man who has spoken so little in public over the past two weeks is getting so much credit — and blame — for what's going on.

The conservative media executive's fingerprints are on virtually every significant move taken by President Donald Trump, from Trump's sweeping order to suspend the country's refugee program and block visitors from seven Muslim-majority countries to the nomination of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court.

Trump raised eyebrows and hackles when he gave Bannon a seat on the powerful National Security Council Principals Committee. Bannon, a shaggy-haired agitator-turned-insider eager to make a lasting mark on Washington, was a strong advocate for Gorsuch, according to a person who spoke with him recently. That person spoke on the condition of anonymity in order to discuss a private conversation.

Bannon's early moves to consolidate power haven't come without pushback.

In a phone call Monday, Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly and Acting Secretary of State Tom Shannon asked the White House to take a back seat in cleaning up confusion caused by the chaotic rollout of the immigration order, according to two U.S. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly about internal government discussions.

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White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters disputed the portrayal of the call with Homeland Security, saying it was the White House that reached out and asked other agencies to take the lead.

Still, the extent of Bannon's influence was underscored by Trump's striking decision over the weekend to add his name to the roster of top national security hands who meet on the Principals Committee, not typically the province of political strategist.

"Steve's the main ideological mover of the administration. He's the chief ideological officer and he has a strong point of view," said Christopher Ruddy, the CEO of Newsmax and a friend of the president. "I think the bond is their world view."

The 64-year-old Bannon shares Trump's business and media experience, as well as his dramatic flair. He's a fellow disruptor who helped Trump capitalize on the populist anger and frustration that propelled them both to the White House.

Rarely seen or heard during Trump's campaign, Bannon is now a fixture.

If Trump is moving quickly to overthrow the established order, Bannon is the one fomenting rebellion.

If White House chief of staff Reince Priebus is there to maintain order and focus, Bannon is there to wage war.

"He wants to be the intellectual, strategist bomb-thrower," says former House Speaker and informal Trump adviser Newt Gingrich, who sees Bannon as the perfect ally to the president in disrupting the status quo. "He does not want to be the guy who makes the trains run on time."

Bannon has cultivated a near-diabolical image in his rare, headline-making interviews.

He recently told The New York Times he sees the media as "the opposition party," and advised the press to "keep its mouth shut" after it underestimated Trump.

"Darkness is good," he told The Hollywood Reporter shortly after Trump's win. "Dick Cheney. Darth Vader. Satan. That's power."

As Trump's chief strategist and senior counselor, Bannon had a hand in crafting the president's inaugural address and in selecting his Cabinet. He's bringing in aides from the conservative Breitbart media empire where he ruled before Trump tapped him to direct his campaign.

Trump's move to add Bannon to the National Security Council has drawn howls from Democrats and even some Republicans. Bernie Sanders called it "dangerous and unprecedented." Republican Sen. John McCain called it a "radical departure" from recent history. Former Clinton adviser Robert Reich called Bannon "nuts and malicious."

Former deputy campaign manager David Bossie, who introduced Trump to Bannon in 2011, says the two got to know each other as Trump appeared multiple times on Bannon's Breitbart radio show over the ensuing years.

"They believe in each other's agendas, which is why they have grown so close," says Bossie.

Still the two are an unusual match. While Trump is not an avid reader, Bossie describes Bannon as "a carnivore of books" who's always reading and talking history — ancient Greece, the Civil War, World War II and more.

Bannon took over Breitbart News after the sudden death of its founder in 2012 left people wondering what would become of the website. By then, the former U.S. Navy officer and Harvard MBA had left behind Goldman Sachs and investment banking, capitalized on an entertainment deal that left him with a share of "Seinfeld" royalties, founded an institute to ferret out government corruption and created a number of his own films, including paeans to Sarah Palin, the tea party movement and Ronald Reagan.

Under Bannon's guidance, Breitbart grew into one the right's most powerful voices as it took on establishment Republicans like House Speaker Paul Ryan. Critics, however, accused Bannon of allowing the website to become a platform for the white nationalist sentiments of the alt-right — a charge Bannon has denied.

His politics appear to skew closer to European, right-wing views than the typical American conservative agenda. He's described himself as an "economic nationalist" and has long advocated for closing off the nation's borders. We're in the midst of an "outright war," he's said, "between 'jihadist Islamic fascism' and the 'Judeo-Christian West.'"

Critics see more self-interest than devotion to conservatism in Bannon's history.

"He's really good at ingratiating himself to prominent people," says Ben Shapiro, a former Breitbart editor who's now a Bannon critic. Shapiro lists Palin, former Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann and website founder Andrew Breitbart as past subjects of Bannon's attention. After Breitbart died, adds Shapiro, Bannon began using the website to promote Trump — "and then he was able to use that to enter into the halls of power."

Another critic, Ben Howe, a filmmaker and conservative blogger who once considered Bannon a mentor and friend, says that while Bannon cultivates the unassuming, rumpled look in public, "he's nothing like that behind the scenes," talking nonstop and screaming at those who cross him.

Bannon, he says, "just looks at Trump as a good vehicle to get into power so that he can accomplish his objectives."

Associated Press writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

Follow Nancy Benac on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/nbenac> and Jill Colvin at <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

Hostage-takers at Delaware prison cite treatment, Trump

By RANDALL CHASE, Associated Press

SMYRNA, Del. (AP) — Inmates at a Delaware prison took four corrections department workers hostage Wednesday, a move the inmates told a local newspaper was due to concerns about their treatment and the leadership of the United States.

The hostage situation drew dozens of officers and law enforcement vehicles to the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna and prompted a statewide lockdown of all prisons. One hostage was released Wednesday afternoon and another was released hours later, leaving authorities negotiating into the evening for the last two being held.

A preliminary investigation suggests the disturbance began about 10:30 a.m. when a correctional officer inside Building C, which houses over 100 inmates, radioed for immediate assistance, Delaware State Police spokesman Sgt. Richard Bratz said. Other officers responded to help, and the employees were taken hostage, he said.

Bratz initially said five employees were taken hostage, but authorities at a later news conference said the number had been revised to four after one person thought to be among the hostages was found in another part of the prison.

Robert Coupe, secretary of the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security, said 27 inmates also had left the building over the course of the evening.

Authorities don't know "the dynamics of the takeover" or whether those inmates had been held against their will, Coupe said.

One of the freed employees was taken to a hospital for injuries that were not life-threatening, authorities said. The condition of the second wasn't immediately available.

Earlier in the day, inmates reached out to The News Journal in Wilmington in two phone calls to explain their actions and make demands. Prisoners funneled the calls to the paper with the help of one inmate's fiancée and another person's mother. The mother told the paper her son was among the hostages.

In that call, an inmate said their reasons "for doing what we're doing" included "Donald Trump. Everything that he did. All the things that he's doing now. We know that the institution is going to change for the worse."

That caller said education for prisoners was the inmates' priority. They also said they want effective rehabilitation for all prisoners and information about how money is allocated to prisons.

Coupe said authorities had been communicating with the hostage-takers via radio. He also noted that

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inmates in Building C have access to television and could be watching the news conference live.

"We'd like to tell them we want to resolve this peacefully," he said.

Coupe declined to comment when asked about the phone calls to the News Journal. but said a dialogue about issues at the prison could happen later.

"Once this matter is resolved safely, then that will be the time to talk if the inmates want to talk about conditions, privileges, those types of things," he said.

Delaware Gov. John Carney spoke briefly, saying he had talked with the hostages' families.

"As you can imagine, it's been very difficult for them as well," the new Democratic governor said.

According to the department's website, the prison is Delaware's largest correctional facility for men, with about 2,500 inmates. It houses minimum, medium, and maximum security inmates, and also houses Kent County detainees awaiting trial.

It employs 1,500 corrections officers, according to Bruce Rogers, counsel for the Correctional Officers Association of Delaware.

In 2004, an inmate there raped a counselor and took her hostage for nearly seven hours at the Smyrna prison, according to an Associated Press report at the time. A department sharpshooter later shot and killed 45-year-old Scott Miller, according to the report, ending the standoff.

Dover attorney Stephen Hampton, who has represented state inmates in civil rights cases, said complaints have increased in the past year from inmates systemwide about substandard medical care and poor record-keeping.

Hampton also said that pretrial inmates at Vaughn and other facilities are locked up for much of the day, without access to gyms or libraries, because rules prohibit mixing pretrial and sentenced inmates.

"There gets to be a tremendous pressure on these inmates," who sometimes make deals just to get out, Hampton said.

AP writers Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Virginia, and David Dishneau in Hagerstown, Maryland, contributed to this report.

GOP pushes 2 top Cabinet picks through to full Senate

By ALAN FRAM and RICHARD LARDNER, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans jammed two of President Donald Trump's top Cabinet picks through the Senate Finance Committee with no Democrats in the room Wednesday after suspending a rule that would have otherwise barred them from taking the vote. The tactic seemed a warning shot that they might deploy brute political muscle in the upcoming fight over the Supreme Court vacancy.

With a near-toxic vapor of divisiveness between the two parties across Capitol Hill, nasty showdowns broke out elsewhere as well. One Senate panel signed off on Trump's choice for attorney general only after senators exchanged heated words, and another committee postponed a vote on the would-be chief of the Environmental Protection Agency after Democrats refused to show up.

Busting through a Democratic boycott of the Finance panel, all 14 Republicans took advantage of Democrats' absence to temporarily disable a committee rule requiring at least one Democrat to be present for votes.

They then used two 14-0 roll calls to approve financier Steve Mnuchin for Treasury secretary and Rep. Tom Price, R-Ga., to be health secretary, ignoring Democrats' demands that the two nominees provide more information about their financial backgrounds.

All the nominations will need full Senate approval.

Underscoring Congress' foul mood, Finance panel Chairman Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said Democrats should be "ashamed" for staying away from his committee's meeting.

"I don't feel a bit sorry for them," he told reporters, adding later, "I don't care what they want at this point."

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Trump won one major victory, as the Senate confirmed Rex Tillerson to be secretary of state. The mostly party-line 56-43 vote came with Democrats critical of Tillerson's close ties to Russia as former Exxon Mobil CEO. Tillerson was sworn in later Wednesday at the White House.

But the prospects that GOP donor Betsy DeVos would win approval as education secretary were jarred when two GOP senators, Susan Collins of Maine and Alaska's Lisa Murkowski, said they opposed her. Both challenged her support for public education, and their defections meant Vice President Mike Pence might need to break a tie in a Senate that Republicans control 52-48.

Congress' day was dominated by confrontation, even as lawmakers braced for an even more ferocious battle over Trump's nomination of conservative federal judge Neil Gorsuch to fill the Supreme Court vacancy.

Democrats were already furious over Republicans' refusal to even consider last year President Barack Obama's pick for the slot, Judge Merrick Garland. Trump fueled the fire by urging Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to "go nuclear" — shorthand for a unilateral change in the chamber's rules so Democrats can't block Gorsuch with a filibuster.

Without a rules change, Republicans will need at least eight Democrats to reach the 60-votes necessary to halt filibusters, or endless procedural delays.

Democrats boycotted Wednesday's abruptly called Finance Committee meeting, as they'd done for a session a day earlier. They say Price and Mnuchin have lied about their financial backgrounds and must answer more questions.

"It's deeply troubling to me that Republicans on the Finance Committee chose to break the rules in the face of strong evidence of two nominees' serious ethical problems," said the panel's top Democrat, Ron Wyden of Oregon.

Democrats say Price had special access to low-priced shares in an Australian biomed firm, even though he testified the offer was available to all investors. They say Mnuchin ran a bank that processed home foreclosures with a process critics say invites fraud.

The two men have denied wrongdoing and have solid Republican backing.

The Senate Judiciary Committee used a party-line 11-9 vote to sign off on Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., for attorney general. That came after Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, had misrepresented remarks he'd made about Sessions weeks ago.

Cruz wasn't present as Franken spoke. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, interrupted Franken twice, calling it "untoward and inappropriate" to disparage the absent Cruz.

Franken said Cruz "personally went after me, he personally impugned my integrity." Angrily pointing at Cornyn, he asked, "You didn't object then, did you?"

Cornyn said he wasn't sure he was there when Cruz spoke.

At the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Democrats boycotted a planned vote on Scott Pruitt, Oklahoma's state attorney general in line to lead the Environmental Protection Agency. The vote was postponed.

Pruitt has questioned the scientific consensus that human activities are contributing to global warming and joined lawsuits against the agency's emission curbs.

Another panel postponed a vote on Trump's pick to head the White House Budget Office, tea party Rep. Mick Mulvaney, R-S.C., as Democrats asked for more time to read the nominee's FBI file.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Michael Biesecker contributed to this report.

Sen. Schumer battered by both the right and left in new role

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Thousands of angry liberals packed the icy sidewalk outside Democratic Sen. Chuck Schumer's Brooklyn apartment. They mocked him with signs like "Grow a spine, Chuck!" and "Chuck's a chicken." And they chanted, "Filibuster everything!"

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Such is the bind Schumer finds himself in as he emerges as the leader of the anti-Trump resistance on Capitol Hill.

The Senate minority leader is not only ridiculed and insulted by President Donald Trump but is also under fire from many of his own constituents, who complain that he is not fighting hard enough against the president.

"He has to champion the resistance or he has to get out of the way!" shouted 39-year-old Hae-Lin Choi, one of the leaders of the protest Tuesday night.

The fourth-term senator has irked many New Yorkers by supporting three of the president's early Cabinet selections. Schumer has since vowed to oppose at least eight of Trump's Cabinet picks, including would-be Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

"Our values are what matters to us. These Cabinet nominees almost to a person, many of them, certainly the big eight, are against our values," Schumer told reporters this week.

Schumer spokesman Angelo Roefaro described the senator as a "leading opponent" of Trump's nominees for his Cabinet and the Supreme Court, and the GOP push to replace the federal health care law.

"The overwhelming majority of New Yorkers, Democrats and even those at the demonstration have shown their appreciation for his strong-willed actions," Roefaro said.

While the demonstrators who crowded into Brooklyn's Grand Army Plaza acknowledged that the senator's stand against Trump's ban on travelers from seven majority-Muslim countries, and his opposition to the president's Supreme Court pick, are a step in the right direction, they said they are still not satisfied.

"He needs to make it impossible for them to get anything done," said Ali Adler, a 28-year-old Brooklyn woman.

Trump first mocked the 66-year-old senator as the Democrats' "head clown" during the fight over the health care law, known as Obamacare. This week, the president branded him "Fake Tears Chuck Schumer" after the senator got choked up while denouncing the president's immigration order.

"I'm going to ask him who was his acting coach," Trump said.

Asked about Trump's insult, White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Wednesday: "Chuck Schumer is not innocent in this. There's a lot of comments he's made. At some point, Chuck Schumer needs to be held accountable for his actions and his words."

At the same time, some of the protesters outside Schumer's apartment in Park Slope said his close ties to the political establishment make it difficult for them to trust him.

Choi called Schumer "as corporate a Democrat as they come" — "bought and paid for by Goldman Sachs."

Another protest organizer, Elizabeth Zeldin, said she was "horrified" by Schumer's early support for Trump's Cabinet.

"I'm very concerned that he is saying the right thing now and is once again going to go back into deal-making mode with the Trump administration," she said. "This is going to be a really tough, long fight ahead, and he can't regress."

The protests at Schumer's doorstep show little sign of slowing down.

"We're not going to sit idly by when our Democracy is crumbling beneath us," said Celia Caro, a 50-year-old Brooklyn art teacher who said the recent women's march was her first protest as an adult.

"I'm in for the long haul," she said.

AP writer Erica Werner in Washington contributed to this report.

That was awkward: Goodell dodges on Raiders, parries on Pats

By EDDIE PELLIS, AP National Writer

HOUSTON (AP) — Nothing produces awkward NFL moments quite like watching the commissioner parry all those thorny issues involving the league's oldest and newest troublemakers — the Raiders and Patriots.

Reporters spent time poking Roger Goodell about "Deflategate," the Raiders' now-threatened move to

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Las Vegas, and other delicate topics at the commissioner's less-formal, less-crowded and, frankly, less-newsy pre-Super Bowl news conference, held on a Wednesday this year instead of the traditional Friday afternoon slot.

Going sans necktie and speaking in a room about half the size as his usual Super Bowl venue, Goodell insisted nothing was off-kilter between the league and either team.

He said "there's a great deal more work to be done" before the Raiders can move to Las Vegas, a reality reinforced after both casino magnate Sheldon Adelson and a backup financier, Goldman Sachs, pulled out of the stadium deal this week. The league is supposed to decide on the Las Vegas move in March.

"But if any key aspect is changed, the process could be slowed down," Eric Grubman, the league's executive vice president of business ventures, told The Associated Press.

Goodell said it was unlikely a casino owner could own a stake in a stadium, which would seem to disqualify Adelson anyway. About the more delicate question of whether it's good business for the league, which has always disdained gambling, to stick a franchise in the gambling capital of America, the commissioner said the league is in touch with the reality that gambling "exists throughout our world."

"We've always said there's a fine line between team sports gambling and the NFL," Goodell said. "We want to protect the integrity of our game and that's something we'll always do."

The commissioner was only four days away from potentially handing the Lombardi Trophy to Patriots owner Robert Kraft. It would be the most awkward commissioner-owner handoff since 1981, when Pete Rozelle presented Raiders owner Al Davis with the trophy while Davis was suing the league over Rozelle's attempt to block the team's move from Oakland to Los Angeles.

Fittingly, Goodell took five questions about the Patriots, almost all of them designed to put him on the defensive. The core of it: "Deflategate," and the four-game suspension he levied against Patriots quarterback Tom Brady to start the season.

Among the highlights: Why didn't Goodell attend a Patriots playoff game, while heading to Atlanta twice? Has he spoken with Brady? How is he getting along with Kraft?

"We have a disagreement about what occurred," Goodell said. "We have been very transparent about what we think the violation was. We went through a lengthy process. We disagree about that. ... I'm not afraid of disagreement. And I don't think disagreement leads to distrust or hatred."

Kraft was among the very few owners who attended the news conference, but he ducked out quickly afterward without taking questions.

Goodell also faced a number of questions on the Chargers' recent move from San Diego to Los Angeles: "Relocations are painful," he said.

Of this week's news reports that San Diego could end up as a home for the Raiders if Las Vegas falls through, Goodell cited a "history of markets that get deals done after a team leaves. It's a painful way to do it." Among those markets are Cleveland, St. Louis, Los Angeles and this year's Super Bowl host, Houston.

On other topics:

—Goodell said no timeline had been set on an investigation into alleged domestic abuse by Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott. He said there's an active investigation into former Giants kicker Josh Brown and no decision has been made about his status.

—About loosening restrictions on marijuana use, Goodell essentially ignored the question and said he wants to include that topic in negotiations with the players' union.

—The commissioner defended widely derided and often non-competitive weekly games on Thursday nights and said they'd remain part of the schedule.

—He fielded no questions about concussions or protecting quarterbacks, even though both remained hot topics all season.

—In the wake of a TV ratings decline, the league will keep looking into ways to decrease the amount of dead time during games.

—Probed a few times on the travel ban and other decisions made recently by President Donald Trump, Goodell refused to wade in, saying he's 100 percent focused on the Super Bowl. "We're in a unique position to have an event on Sunday that will bring the world together," he said.

Goodell also announced the NFL would return to Mexico City next year for a game pitting — who else?

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— the Raiders and the Patriots.

If the commissioner meets up with Kraft there — or on Sunday, for that matter — he insists everything will be just fine.

"I would tell you it's not awkward at all for me," Goodell said. "We have a job to do. We do our job. We understand fans are loyal and passionate for their team and they object and don't like the outcome. That's not unusual for me."

AP Pro Football Writer Barry Wilner and Sports Writer Kristie Rieken contributed to this report.

For more NFL coverage: <http://www.pro32.ap.org> and http://www.twitter.com/AP_NFL

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 2, the 33rd day of 2017. There are 332 days left in the year. This is Groundhog Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 2, 1887, Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, held its first Groundhog Day festival.

On this date:

In 1653, New Amsterdam — now New York City — was incorporated.

In 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending the Mexican-American War, was signed.

In 1914, Charles Chaplin made his movie debut as the comedy short "Making a Living" was released by Keystone Film Co. The musical "Shameen Dhu," featuring the song "Too Ra Loo Ra Loo Rai," opened on Broadway.

In 1925, the legendary Alaska Serum Run ended as the last of a series of dog mushers brought a life-saving treatment to Nome, the scene of a diphtheria epidemic, six days after the drug left Nenana.

In 1932, Duke Ellington and His Orchestra recorded "It Don't Mean a Thing (If It Ain't Got That Swing)" for Brunswick Records.

In 1942, a Los Angeles Times column by W.H. Anderson urged security measures against Japanese-Americans, arguing that a Japanese-American "almost inevitably ... grows up to be a Japanese, not an American."

In 1959, public schools in Arlington and Norfolk, Virginia, were racially desegregated without incident.

In 1964, Ranger 6, a lunar probe launched by NASA, crashed onto the surface of the moon as planned, but failed to send back any TV images.

In 1971, Idi Amin, having seized power in Uganda, proclaimed himself president.

In 1980, NBC News reported the FBI had conducted a sting operation targeting members of Congress using phony Arab businessmen in what became known as "Abscam," a codename protested by Arab-Americans.

In 1990, in a dramatic concession to South Africa's black majority, President F.W. de Klerk lifted a ban on the African National Congress and promised to free Nelson Mandela.

In 1992, longtime "Miss America" emcee Bert Parks died in La Jolla (HOY'-uh), California, at age 77.

Ten years ago: Tornadoes killed 21 people in central Florida. A grim report from the world's leading climate scientists and government officials said that global warming was so severe, it would "continue for centuries" and that humans were to blame. Texas Gov. Rick Perry issued an order making Texas the first state to require that schoolgirls get vaccinated against HPV, a sexually transmitted virus that causes cervical cancer.

Five years ago: Egyptian security forces clashed with stone-throwing protesters enraged by the failure of police to prevent a soccer riot the night before that killed 74 people. Donald Trump announced his

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endorsement of Republican Mitt Romney for president, saying the former Massachusetts governor was "not going to allow bad things to continue to happen to this country we all love."

One year ago: Health officials reported that a person in Texas had become infected with the Zika (ZEE'-kuh) virus through sex in the first case of the illness being transmitted within the United States. A suicide bomber detonated an explosive aboard a Somali Airbus, forcing it to make an emergency landing at Mogadishu's international airport; only the bomber was killed. Yahoo announced it was laying off about 1,700 employees. Bob Elliott, half of the enduring television and radio comedy team Bob and Ray, died in Cundy's Harbor, Maine, at age 92.

Today's Birthdays: Gossip columnist Liz Smith is 94. Former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing (val-eh-REE' ZHEES'-kahr deh-STANG') is 91. Actor Robert Mandan is 85. Comedian Tom Smothers is 80. Rock singer-guitarist Graham Nash is 75. Television executive Barry Diller is 75. Actor Bo Hopkins is 73. Country singer Howard Bellamy (The Bellamy Brothers) is 71. TV chef Ina (EE'-nuh) Garten is 69. Actor Jack McGee is 68. Actor Brent Spiner (SPY'-nur) is 68. Rock musician Ross Valory (Journey) is 68. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, is 65. The president of South Korea, Park Geun-hye (goon-hay), is 65. Model Christie Brinkley is 63. Actor Michael Talbott is 62. Actress Kim Zimmer is 62. Actor Michael T. Weiss is 55. Actor-comedian Adam Ferrara is 51. Rock musician Robert DeLeo (Army of Anyone; Stone Temple Pilots) is 51. Actress Jennifer Westfeldt is 47. Rock musician Ben Mize is 46. Rapper T-Mo is 45. Actress Marissa Jaret Winokur is 44. Actress Lori Beth Denberg is 41. Singer Shakira is 40. Actor Rich Sommer is 39. Country singer Blaine Larsen is 31. Actress Zosia Mamet is 29.

Thought for Today: "Absence is to love what wind is to fire; it extinguishes the small, it inflames the great." — Bussy-Rabutin, French soldier and writer (1618-1693).